RESTORATION REVIEW

The Restoration Mind . . .

RESTORATION AND REPENTANCE

The lamp of your body is the eye. When your eyes are sound, you have light for your whole body; but when the eyes are bad, you are in darkness. See to it then that the light you have is not darkness.—Luke 11:34-35

Jesus came so that men might have sound eyes, which we take to mean a clean conscience and a pure heart. If man's heart is right, then his whole life is full of light. The good life depends on a good heart. The old hymn that asks *Is thy heart right with God?* is asking if the eyes are sound. Psalms 37:31 describes the righteous man as "The law of his God is in his heart, his steps do not falter," while Psalms 112:7 adds that "Bad news shall have no terrors for him, because his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord."

One does not have to be a human being for long without realizing what can happen to the heart. One prophet assures us that "The heart is the most deceitful of all things, desperately sick; who can fathom it? (Jer. 17:9) The same prophet speaks of the heart as *evil, haughty, whorish, idolatrous,* and *revolting.* He equates sin to "the imagination of the heart" and describes the people's heart as "departing from the Lord." Jer. 3:10 reveals that it is *pretense* that God hates, that he rejected Judah because she did not "return unto me with her whole heart." Again and again the Bible makes it clear that it is the heart that God wants circumcized. As Joel 2:13 puts it: "Rend your hearts and not your garments." And so Paul writes: "The true Jew is he who is such inwardly, and the true circumcision is of the heart."

This is the idea of repentance. The penitent man has sound eyes, for his heart is open unto the Lord. The eye is single for it sincerely seeks God, and it is stripped of all sham and hypocrisy. The penitent man is *real* on the inside, whatever external form his religion may take. Isa. 66:2 speaks of the penitent man when it says: "The man I look to is a man down-trodden and distressed, one who reveres my words." God loves the broken heart, the contrite heart, the longing heart. This is repentance and repentance is the basis of restoration. It is when man realizes his brokenness and his fragmentariness that God can reach out and restore him to Himself.

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We err when we leave the impression that repentance means a *change of mind,* for it means so much more than this. Repentance means turning from sin just as faith means turning to God. It means realizing one's own helplessness and relying upon God's grace. It involves an entire reorientation of the personality, a true restoration of man's life to God. It means that one becomes a part of the new humanity, a new person.

Neither is repentance adequately defined as *sorrow for sin*, for it implies a completely changed attitude toward sin and all of life. When Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment and answers with "Love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength," he is talking about the penitent life. *Love God with all your personality, with all that you are!* This is what it means to repent, to experience reformation, to be restored to God.

There is an important sense in which repentance is to be viewed as a gift of God to the sinner, and not simply as the work of the one experiencing conversation. Acts 5:31 refers to God granting repentance to Israel, while Acts 11:18 mentions that he gave repentance to the Gentiles. Rom. 2:4 says that it is God's kindness that leads men to repent. 2 Tim. 2:2 5 shows that it is God who leads men to repent and who shows them the truth.

This is why a good case can be made for repentance *preceding* faith, that man must repent before he can believe. We find the heart of Jesus' preaching to be "Repent and believe the gospel," while Paul spoke of "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." The idea is that it is only the *prepared* heart, prepared by contriteness and brokenness, that can believe. Faith is not something that one turns on at will. Surely it is more than the acceptance of certain propositions. Faith is *trust*, an assurance that penetrates deep inside one, a conviction that all is well with one's soul. The NEB does well to render Acts 20:21 as "repentance before God and *trust* in our Lord Jesus." Through repentance, the will to be restored, is man led to a life of trust. God gives this spirit to the one who really wants Him.

Repentance can best be understood as *a kind of life.* This is the cry of John the Baptist at the outset, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is like saying, "Experience such a restoration to God as to become a new person, for God's reign is on the horizon." Surely John is saying more than *Change your mind* or *Be sorry for your sin.* He is inviting them to enter upon a new life by yielding their hearts to God. This is implied in Matt. 3:11: "I baptize you in water unto repentance." He must be saying, "I immerse you into a new kind of life."

The story of Zacchaeus shows us the nature of repentance. This little man was at first selfish and greedy, and perhaps even unjust' in some of his dealings as superintendent of taxes. It is enough to say that he was not what he should have been before God, which is the story. with all of us. But meeting Jesus made all the difference in the world with Zacchaeus. We watch him with interest as he scales a tree in order to get a glimpse at the passing Jesus. Was it mere curiosity? The record tells us that "He was eager to see what Jesus looked like." He could have been back at the tax office shuffling his receipts or out harassing some poor soul for not paying his taxes on time.

People like tax superintendents are not notorious for climbing trees in order to get a better view of Jesus. Usually such folk could not care less. While he still was not what God wanted him to be as he scampered up that tree, he was certainly drawing near to the kingdom. We might say that in that moment God began to give him repentance. There was an important relationship about the way Zacchaeus had come to think about himself and what he had heard about Jesus. Taxes could wait. He wanted Jesus, or at least he thought he might want him. Then there is Jesus walking through the crowd of people, many no doubt curiosity seekers. Surely there is an important reason why he picks out the little man in the tree to speak to. Jesus knew the condition of his heart. He knew that repentance was on the burner of his heart simmering. And when Jesus spoke to him, calling him by name, wow! It was Zacchaeus' finest hour. Life would never be the same again. He had embarked upon the new humanity.

It is the story of a *changed* man, a penitent man. Even in the face of those who despised him Zacchaeus says to Jesus: "Here and now, sir, I give half of my possessions to charity; and if I have cheated anyone, I am ready to repay him four times over." This is more than sorrow for sin and change of will however important these are. It is a case of a man being restored to God in body, soul and spirit. A revolution has occurred in a man's life. He is completely changed and made new. This is repentance.

This is why repentance is not a once for all experience. It is not a *step* in some plan of salvation, as if it is done once for all, leaving one free to move on to the next step. Repentance, like restoration, is a lifetime experience, for it involves our aims, attitudes, aspirations. Repentance is not necessarily fast. Thoughts toward God may have long brooded in the heart of Zacchaeus before that day he encountered Jesus, and they no doubt continued, deepening and maturing, long after. Repentance is like conversion, if indeed it is not the same, in that for the believer it is a never ending experience. The apostle Peter was converted long before Jesus turned toward the cross, and yet the Master says to him in Lk. 22:32: "When you are converted, strengthen your brothers."

The continual experience of repentance may be seen in both its positive and negative aspects. Repentance means to turn to God, and yet one turns to God more and more as he lives in Him. This is why we say that repentance is a kind of life, a life that grows sweeter and richer with the years. But repentance also means to turn from sin, and in turning from sin we come to hate it. There may be something wrong if in our Christian faith we are still attracted to sin, still really love it, even if we do manage to turn from it. When our penitent hearts grow stronger we will actually come to loath the sins that now allure us. The philosopher Montaigne was talking about most of us when he said, explaining how kids should be reared: "Children should be taught to hate vice for its own texture, so that they will not only avoid it in action, but abominate it in their hearts — that the very thought of it may disgust them whatever form it takes."

The penitent mind is therefore the restoration mind. The only Restoration Movement worth its salt is that of the individual who so yields to God's grace in his own personal life as to be restored to the beauty of soul that God intends for him. God does not view us as communities, congregations or movements as much as individuals. Jesus will look to you and call your name as he did Zacchaeus when you really want Jesus. You too can see what Jesus really looks like in your own life, and his image can be reflected in your own life. This is restoration. This is repentance. — *the Editor*

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HOW ABOUT THE PAID MINISTRY?

In a recent meeting in the home of Bob and Mary Denney in Redondo Beach, California I had the honor of sitting with the venerable Jimmie Lovell, who lives in the same area. Jimmie, with his wife Vivian, are delightful people to be around, and it is their kind who made this country great and who give us hope for the future of the church. As editor of *Action* and as promoter of missions around the world, Jimmie Lovell has done far more than any other man among us to motivate our people to share the gospel with the nations of the world. One of his favorite expressions is "Use me while I live," an attitude toward life that helps to explain his success in the business world as well as in religious endeavors. He is indeed a man of *action*, and he is ubiquitous along with it, having traveled upwards of two million miles by air alone. Now in his 70's and presumably retired, he continues to be what he has always been, an inspiration to all those whose lives he touches.

Realizing that he is a man of vast experience in the life and work of the Church of Christ, I was eager to learn what he thought of the future, and especially his idea of what we should do today to make possible a better tomorrow. He emphasized the need of religion in the home, with parents teaching their children, and less stress on the Sunday School. But what impressed me the most was his answer to my question, *What basic change would you make in the life of the church if it were within your power?* He said that he would do away with all salaries in the church, allowing for the ministry to be carried on by laymen or those who are self-supporting. He thought a move toward a mutual ministry rather than a professional one would be a blessing to the church's future. He suggested that a professional ministry invites a secularism and a materialism that thwarts our spiritual energies and that a return to a shared ministry would draw upon the talents of many of our people that now go unused.

That a brother of Jimmie Lovell's experience and background would make this kind of evaluation I found most engaging. All this he said to me, talking about the church of tomorrow having no salaried ministry and exalting the potential of mutual ministry, with an apparent obliviousness to the fact that I cultivated a notorious reputation in the Church of Christ for advocating the same views. It was as if he were making off-the-cuff remarks to some professor at Pepperdine rather than to one who had been hauled off to jail for contending for the same sort of thing that he was saying. It struck me as odd, and yet it was reassuring for one of brother Lovell's stature to be making this kind of critical evaluation regarding the church's future.

A few days after this I was in the home of Louis and Bess Cochran in Nashville. Louis is known to our readers as the author of *The Fool of God* and *Raccoon John Smith,* and the two together are remembered as authors of *Captives of the Word.* It is less known among our people that Louis has written several other novels and that Bess is a writer in her own right. In our visit together the conversation somehow turned to the question of the church and its ministry. Bess revealed that she had some rather strong convictions along that line, adding that she just might have to start her own church, said facetiously of course. That was an opener for the jesting Louie, who insisted that his wife would do very well indeed as the head of a new church!

"What changes would you make, Bess, if you could make the church over your way?," I asked. She replied that first of all she would do away with the paid ministry. I asked her why she felt this way. As the daughter of a minister she recalled the old days when preachers were dedicated, studious, and hard working, giving Saturday nights for preparation for Sunday's sermon, all with only modest financial reward. Today it is different, she explained. Big salaries make preachers competitive for the richer churches. Preachers are more worldly than before, more concerned for things. On Saturday nights they are more likely to be out on the town than in devotional study. She told of an old minister who recounted to her that in his youth, when the preachers got together, they talked about the Lord's work; whereas now, when they get together, they talk about what salary the various churches pay. So, Bess thinks it just as well that we be good Campbellites and think in terms of having a mutual ministry that draws upon the talents of many rather than a professional one that for some reason leads us more to the world than to God.

Lou and Bess Cochran are Disciples, so their knowledge of our skirmishes in other wings of the Restoration Movement has to come second-hand. As historians of our Movement they are aware of the issues that have been discussed, but they can hardly be expected to appreciate the ramifications of the ministry issue in the Churches of Christ. We do, after all, have several small groups of congregations that do not follow the minister

system for conscience sake. With some of us it is such a crucial issue as to effect the validity of the church's ministry.

It is interesting that in these two experiences, with Bess Cochran and Jimmie Lovell, doubts were expressed from responsible and representative thinkers from both the Disciples and the Church of Christ about a system that I have long adjudged to be the taproot of so many of our most serious problems.

I realize that Bess and Jimmie were not suggesting that all our preachers be immediately fired or that there is something scripturally or inherently wrong with a paid ministry. They were saying no more than that out of their long years of experience in the church it is apparent that something is basically wrong and that it may be in our failure to restore to the church a true priesthood of all believers. But that is saying a great deal, and it is a matter that we should give serious consideration.

Many times through the years I have recommended a policy in respect to the paid ministry that I believe would go far in correcting the abuses of "the pastor system," and that is to support men financially only as they labor in ministering to people other than those who pay them. This means, of course, that I *do* believe in a paid ministry so long as the ministers are carrying the gospel to the lost and needy. Many an evil is averted if the minister is supported by people other than those to whom he preaches. What a difference it would make if each of our congregations resolved: *we will gladly support men to preach the Word so long as they take it to others, but we will never pay a man to preach to us.*

This would restore to a church the scriptural function of elders, who are to be teaching pastors of the flock, and it would provide for the mutual ministry implied in the scriptures. It would turn ministers out into the world as evangelists to work with weak churches or in mission fields.

It should embarrass those of us in the Restoration Movement, supposedly an effort to make all God's people ministers, that there are others who do so much more along these lines than we do. The Quakers are known for their goodness around the world, and yet they have no professional ministry. The Mormons have far-flung missionary programs and their youth spend two years in special witness of their faith, all without anybody being on the payroll. The Plymouth Brethren have chapels all over the world, but none is ministered to by a professional.

More significant than those doubts expressed by the likes of the brother and sister mentioned above is the misgivings of the younger generation in the church, who see most ministers as products and preservers of an institutional system. Even the younger preachers are taking a second look at their "calling" as professional prayers and sermonizers, wondering if it is really scripturally, psychologically and socially valid. Some have already resolved to leave the system and make a living some other way, while others, still in

college; are determined not to be caught in that ecclesiastical trap that often makes men less than honest.

Whether we should go on having a paid ministry is not so much the question as whether we are to have a valid and meaningful ministry. In Eph. 4:11-13 Paul describes the ministerial function as being "to equip God's people for work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ." The minister's work, then, is clearly to make ministers of others. He ministers himself out of a job, so to speak, and then moves on to others who need him. Gal 6:6 seems to be saying that one who does *that* kind of work deserves to be rewarded financially. — *the Editor.*

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Second in a Series . . .

SOME CHURCH OF CHRIST HEROES

Faith was his greatest shield, Enthusiasm was his greatest weapon, Death his greatest victory.

So reads a new stone on a new grave in a new cemetery behind a new meetinghouse for the Church of Christ in Grassy, near Arab, Alabama. The tribute in marble is especially significant in that it was composed by an elder of a congregation in honor of a fellow elder, a brother who passed from this earth while he was doing what he loved most, teaching the Word to the congregation on Lord's Day.

It has been nearly 25 years since I first met Oliver D. Stone. He then lived on a farm near the Grassy congregation that he served as an elder. He was one of those hospitable men, along with his dear wife who survives him, who always had the preachers in his home who came to hold meetings. These were significant occasions to him, for it gave him further opportunity to talk about the Bible. He loved the Word as few men do, and he delighted in entertaining new ideas. And he loved people, especially children. Nothing pleased him more than to go hiking or on a fishing trip with a bunch of kids, always talking about the Bible along the way. This had its effect upon the youth growing up in the congregation who came to love this man so deeply. It was a sad ordeal to send out the word to these kids, now with families of their own, that O. D. Stone was gone. They knew that the trips back home to Grassy would never be the same without brother Stone up teaching the Bible. "He died while up teaching the Bible?," they would respond to their parents, "How else!"

Oliver Stone was youth's kind of man: enthusiastic, hopeful, confiding, trusting, nonjudgmental. And yet he was a man of substance. He was no phony, but plain Oliver Stone who lived and let live, and they loved him for it. I remember him as an example of Paul's words "Love believes all things," for he was this way almost to the point of being naive. Not only did he put the best, not the worst, interpretation on what someone did, giving him every benefit of the doubt, but he would go on believing when there was hardly any ground left to believe. As a building contractor he often "lost" materials that somehow managed to take an legs and walk away. When such items sometimes showed up in the possession of some of his workers, he would find someway to make an excuse for them. In this suspicious, distrusting world his simple, gracious faith was indeed refreshing.

But what I admire most about Oliver Stone is the way he responded to the recent unity efforts among Churches of Christ, along with the changes in attitude and practice that this called far. When I first began to hold meetings in that part of Alabama, where I eventually conducted 25 or more through the years, everything was orthodox Church of Christ doctrine, except that I supported Grassy in their determination to have a congregation not dependent on the pastor system. I held meetings under tents, under brush arbors, in the open air, as well as in our church buildings. I rapped the sects rather hard and baptized scores and scores of people. I continually issued the challenge that the Church of Christ is scriptural in name, doctrine and practice, and I had more fusses and debates with ignorant, undisciplined preachers than I could count on the fingers of both hands.

That Oliver Stone could somehow endure the Leroy Garrett of those days, and then go on in his senior years to make the changes he did is surely a tribute to his openness. And he, along with his fellow elders, led the Grassy congregation into this new freedom, so that now, even though he is gone, Grassy is a free church in the Lord, willing to give any reasonable brother a fair hearing and any new idea a chance to prove itself. All through these years of change Grassy has left its pulpit open to all viewpoints, and they continue to invite "orthodox" and "unorthodox" alike to address them. Even now as they lay plans far a unity meeting they are eager that it be a love feast in which every participant is not only received with affection, but that every viewpoint be given a sympathetic hearing.

Oliver Stone was a man who never grew too old to learn and to change. When it dawned on him what liberty in Jesus really means, and that the church of Christ an earth involves far more than what we had always thought, he was as joyously liberated as a man loosed from years of imprisonment in a dark cave. Once when I was back in Grassy brother Stone wanted me to go with him to call on the shut-ins, and he gladly included in the number some "brother Baptists." He went on to call some of the non-Church of Christ ministers in the area brother. A few years earlier I would have gotten on to him for that! But once Oliver's concept of brotherhood came closer to Jesus' concept of the kingdom of

God, he found brothers all across the country, and he fell in love with every one of them. Somehow, after all these years, he came up with brothers that I hadn't baptized!

As James Ledbetter, once a fellow elder to Oliver, said in his lines of praise on marble, Oliver's greatest weapon was his enthusiasm. Not content that Grassy congregation hide itself in an old building back in the sticks, he campaigned for a new brick structure out on the highway, and suggested that the church could have a large cemetery out back and help pay for the building by selling lots. It is all now a reality, with brother Stone living long enough to enjoy the new building and being among the first to be laid to rest in the new cemetery.

Death his greatest victory. James is right here too, for all his life Oliver looked forward to the experience of death and to what he believed it leads to. He made his loved ones promise that in his last hours they would not allow physicians to give him any anesthetics so that he could enthusiastically drink deep of life's last great drama, death itself.

Oliver's last years were difficult ones. Failures in business cost him everything he had, even his name. He had grown old and was left a poor man, though earlier he had accumulated considerable wealth. Even the savings laid aside for his and his wife's declining years had to be sacrificed. But somehow the Lord strengthened him and even in these last year's his enthusiasm was unabated.

And the Lord granted Oliver's lifetime desire about death. He took him on a Sunday when no doctors or anesthetics were around. Oliver had opened the old Book before the congregation and began to teach as he had far so many years. The Lord sent an angel to touch him gently on the shoulder and bid him home. He laid down on the floor of the meetinghouse and fell asleep in Jesus, and while he was at it he drank deeply and enthusiastically of this world's last great drama, death itself. — *the Editor*

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MINI-MEETING DIARY

It hardly seems possible that since beginning these mini-meetings early this year that I have already visited 21 different places, with at least 12 more scheduled before the year closes. This is possible only because I did not return to college teaching this fall, leaving me free to arrange visits on into the week rather than just an weekends. I am not yet sure whether I will return to teaching next fall or take an assignment with the government, if either; so I am continuing these meetings as if I had nothing else to do. I plan to get to them all, to everyone who invites me, sooner or later, regardless of other plans.

A forthcoming visit to the west coast, my third this year, calls for the following schedule. Anyone is invited to attend these meetings if the name and address of the host is given. Some are with congregations, some with colleges, some in homes. You should write or call the host for further information.

Eugene, Oregon (Nov. 10-11) Albert Weeks, 501 Division #58, Eugene, Oregon 97402.

Eureka, California (Nov. 12-14) Stanley McDaniel, College of the Redwoods, Eureka, Ca. 95501.

Oakland, California (Nov. 15) Private meeting.

San Bruno, California (Nov. 16) Charles Russell, 1860 Willow Way, San Bruno, Ca. 94066.

Pomona, California (Nov. 17-18) Ruth Cassell, 536 Lincoln, Pomona, Ca. 91760. Phone 714-622-7303.

Casa Grande, Arizona (Nov. 19-21) Lester LeMay, 317 E. 4th St., Casa Grande, Arizona 85222.

One of my most interesting experiences in recent weeks was a visit to Amarillo with those we call “the non-Sunday School Church of Christ.” I had meetings both in homes and with congregations. For these people to invite *me* and to open at least one pulpit to me is in itself significant. More important than anything I might have said is the testimony that these dear brothers in the Lord are broadening their horizons and expanding their concerns for our larger brotherhood. To have me around was risky, but they took the risk. Amarillo is sort of headquarters to these brethren, for here they not only have five substantial congregations, but also their Bible Training School, conducted by the venerable patriarch of the non-class churches, G. B. Shelburne, Jr., and a great leader he is. It is also the home of two of their most respected editors, Gene Shelburne of *Christian Appeal* and Baxter Loe of *Gospel Tidings*. Visiting with these men was most edifying. They have a lot to offer to the united congregation of Jesus’ people, which will one day be a reality.

Far from being the obscurantists that they are accused of being, these people are progressive, intelligent and exciting. Baxter Loe had just returned from a trip around the world, visiting mission stations in Vietnam and India, and preaching in Israel and immersing in the Arabian Sea. He is involved in such nitty-gritty issues as burial rights for believers in Bombay. While I was in Amarillo, another brother Shelburne returned for a furlough from his mission to Malawi, Africa. While not long since their idea of mission work was to go to Abilene or Memphis and start a “loyal church,” these brethren now stand so tall that they can see all the way around the world. And it is quite an experience to walk through some of their more substantial buildings, comparable to anyone else’s, and see a large fellowship hall, a suite of offices for the ministerial staff (one Amarillo congregation has *three* ministers!), but no classrooms. When one recalls that usually the classrooms are used but an hour a week anyhow, he is forced to conclude that it might not

be such a bad idea after all — not to have them, that is! But these brethren find *scriptural* reasons not to have them, reasons altogether plausible and reasonable. The time is coming, we have reason to believe, when this position will not be so significant to them as to any longer make it a test of Christian fellowship. In the meantime I find myself deeply in love with them, and I accept them as my full blood brothers in the Lord, classes or no classes. And I greatly admire them for stretching their minds and standing tall in this age of mediocrity.

Perhaps I should tell also of impressive experiences in Nashville, Baltimore, Arab, Alabama, Boone Terre, Missouri, and Terre Haute, Indiana, but space forbids, except to say in all these places I met dedicated, devoted disciples who are really "turned on" for Jesus and who are eager to see His church truly become "the pillar and ground of the truth," with a new appreciation of what *the truth* might mean. I can hardly wait for the spiritual explosion that surely awaits Nashville.

The visit to Illinois was especially significant because of its variety, illustrating just how lines are being crossed these days. I first spoke to a large gathering of college youth at Little Galilee Christian Encampment, near Normal, on *What is Jesus really like?* The students were from several colleges and many religious backgrounds, but it was sponsored by the Independent Christian Churches in the area. They cottoned real well to the Jesus I saw in the scriptures. Next was a luncheon in Decatur, attended by some 30 brethren from several of our Restoration groups. I shared with them what I believe to be our greatest tasks in restoring unity to our divided ranks, the first of which is to make our people more sensitive to the urgency for unity and to cause them to see the sin of division. They made plans to continue such meetings together.

The third session was in the home of John and Marion Pierce in Urbana, which is the parsonage of the Webber Street Church of Christ, John being minister to that Independent congregation. John and Marion are angelic and make engaging hosts. That night they gathered a select group of preachers and others from our three major wings, and we had a fairly successful meeting of minds in reference to the nature of unity, except that the Disciple minister thought that we were too insistent about immersion as the door to Christian fellowship.

On Sunday in Illinois I had three major assignments, all in pulpits. One in an Independent Christian Church, one in a non-instrument Church of Christ, and one in a Church of Christ that had recently merged with a Christian Church. In Charleston I addressed the Central Christian Church on *The Mystery of Religion,* drawn from 1 Tim. 3:16. In the same town that afternoon I participated in the dedication service for the new building of the Heritage Chapel Church of Christ, basing my remarks on early Restoration history, especially in reference to how our *first* meetinghouse, Brush Run, came to be, and how it should stand as a symbol of Christian unity throughout history.

That evening I addressed the Emerson Street Church of Christ in Bloomington on the nature of Christian fellowship. This had special meaning to me since that congregation recently merged with the Sunset Christian Church of the same city. For a Church of Christ and a Christian Church to unite their efforts in this way is surely one way to undo our ugly history of division. In their deliberations together, which extended over three months and some 18 hours of discussion and prayer, they decided that the main reason for uniting should be to fulfill the Lord's prayer that his people be one. Both groups now use the building used by the Church of Christ, and that is the name retained. The presence of an organ in the newly formed congregation would mar the story with some of our folk, but this was decided on only because it was a matter upon which there was no serious objection. But this surely goes down in our history as one of the first instances, if not the first, of a Church of Christ and Christian Church merging, and undoubtedly the only instance in recent history of a Church of Christ assembling one Sunday *without* the instrument and the next Sunday *with* it. Interpret it as you will, we have to concede that these folks in Bloomington are pioneers, and I love pioneers. I predict that there will be a lot of such merging and uniting before this generation passes away.

Bob and Betty Duncan were my gracious hosts while in Bloomington. Bob is a professor at the state university there, and they are both dear friends of many years. But my general host for the Illinois trip was James R. Ross, another longtime friend of premillennial Church of Christ background, who now labors as a campus minister, sponsored by the Christian Church.

All this narrative about the Illinois experience indicates a lot of crossing of lines between our various parties. This may disturb some of our more staid brethren, but surely we can see that it is going to take more and more of this kind of thing if we overcome our divisive ways. God be praised! — *the Editor*

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REAL REASONS FOR DISUNITY

James Robert Ross

Since the Campbells we have blamed creeds, opinions, and errors in Christian doctrine for Christendom's divisions. And it is true that they have contributed to division particularly by helping to crystalize doctrinal disagreements. However, they often are merely symptoms of the disease of division rather than the real causes. It is the purpose of this essay to examine some of the basic spiritual causes underlying the disgraceful. divided state of the church.

In the first place, disunity is related to a legalistic view of salvation. Legalism has a rather strict definition in traditional theological conversation, *viz.* the doctrine that one's relationship with God is *based upon* obedience to law — any law, whether in the Old Testament, New Testament or denominational creed and handbook. Sometimes it is used to mean an acceptance of the authority of scripture, but that is not the case here.

Legalism in the first sense is the perverted gospel which Paul combats in the Galatian letter. His condemnation of a "different gospel, which is not another gospel" (Gal. 1:6, 7) has often been applied to various teachings on baptism, the Lord's Supper, or the order of public worship. However, in the context of Paul's letter the "different gospel" is the teaching that justification depends not only upon faith in Christ but upon circumcision and the commitment to the law which circumcision symbolizes (Gal. 3:1,2,11; 5:2-6).

Legalism, the judaizing heresy, was the greatest single cause of division in the church in its infant years according to the account we have in Acts and from what we learn from the letters of Paul. Circumcision as such is no longer an issue in the church, but the position that legal obedience is the foundation of our fellowship with God is still held and unfortunately is extensively taught in the churches of Christ, and it is still a major divisive influence.

Of course, no one openly preaches salvation by works. It works in a rather more subtle manner. It is said that God requires non-instrumental singing or weekly observance of the Lord's Supper or an amillennial eschatology or individual, not congregational, support of orphans. If one is not obedient to these laws or doctrinal opinions, he is not a Christian. His salvation depends upon his keeping them or upon keeping some similar set of laws. The church must be split, if necessary, in order to keep itself pure of those who do not accept these laws as binding upon the Christian conscience.

Unity can only be realized when Christians have a renewed appreciation of the biblical emphasis of salvation by grace. If God receives both me and my brother by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, then we are obligated to receive one another on the same basis, grace. Both of us can likely see the other's failings, and we will often disagree on the precise application of God's will in our lives. But we can never use the other's weakness as a pretense for breaking fellowship (Rom. 14).

A second fundamental reason for disunity is a confusion of Scripture and theology. A typical conversation with one of my brethren will illustrate this point.

Me:"My position of this doctrine is thus and thus. Scriptures No.1, 2, etc. seem to me to support this view."

My Friend:"But the Bible plainly says: quote. . . unquote (book, chapter, and verse)."

Me:"But I think you are misinterpreting or misapplying that Scripture in this way, etc, etc."

My Friend: “I am not interpreting at all. I simply speak where the Bible speaks. You are substituting interpretation for the Bible. If you would just accept the Bible, you would see your error.”

Me:“But I *do* believe the Bible.”

My Friend:“But you obviously don’t believe, because you have just disagreed with what the Bible says.”

I confess that I have never won such an argument. Moreover, I doubt that Socrates, Paul the Apostle, Alexander Campbell, or William Buckley could fare much better. You see, it is already assumed by my friend that his theology is equivalent with what the Bible says. If I disagree with him, I disagree with the Bible. My friend, in face, does not believe that he has a theology which is stamped with the marks of his historical and ecclesiastical background.

For reason of limitations of space I do not now belabor the point. I simply assume that the revelation of God in Christ witnessed by the apostles and prophets in Holy Writ is not identical with my apprehension of that revelation. On the other hand, one’s theology is inevitably developed with other than purely biblical elements. We must not only seek a correct grammatical and historical understanding of the Bible, but we must also relate this understanding to our personal lives and integrate it with all of our experience.

The idea that the Bible is the sole content of our theology is certainly not found in the Bible itself. There are many questions important to Christian faith which the Bible does not answer or which it answers only in terms of a foreign historical and cultural situation. For example, how often should the Lord’s Supper be observed? The Bible nowhere gives a clear, definitive answer. The New Testament tells us that on one occasion one group of Christians met to partake of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It also says that Other Christians “broke bread” daily from house to house (Acts 2:46). Nowhere does it either lay down a law for Eucharistic observance or formulate a principle of approved apostolic example. All such laws and hermeneutical principles are products of our personal theological ingenuity. We must consider the whole data of Scripture including not only the references to instances of observance of the Eucharist but the apostolic emphasis on the passion of Christ, its central place in faith and preaching, and relate all of this to the tradition of weekly observance which can be traced into the second century.

When we refuse to recognize the human, fallible elements in our particular style of Christian life, worship, and teaching, we tend to cut ourselves off from those who have developed different styles. One step toward unity is the humble recognition that we all stand under the judgment and the grace of God in Jesus Christ, whom we serve according to our best comprehension of his will.

A third and perhaps the most fundamental cause of disunity is carnal pride and envy. In the I Corinthian letter, which is often quoted in condemnation of denominationalism and division, Paul tells us why such divisions occur:"For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are you not carnal, do you not walk after the manner of men?" (I Cor. 3:3).

The fallen, corrupt nature of man is the cause of disunity in the Church of Christ now as in the first century. One reason we have failed to see this is because we have often stressed the strictly personal virtues rather than the interpersonal and social virtues. Most of us hear frequent condemnation of fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, drunkenness, and revelings — and properly so since they are condemned in the New Testament as works of the flesh. But these seven works of the flesh fall into a more comprehensive list which also includes the following: "enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings" (Gal. 5:19-21).

As far as quantity of words is concerned, Paul devotes as much attention or more to the latter type of sin as to the first, not that any essential difference can be made. The point is that envy and party spirit are classified with fornication and drunkenness. And when we begin viewing divisions with the same horror as we now see drunken debauchery, we may hope for unity among God's people. And let us not underestimate the seriousness of the problem. Paul plainly tells us "that they who practice such things (such things as strife and division) shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21b).

Some of my friends tell me that in matters of fellowship they wish to be on the "safe side." By this they mean that they consider it spiritually risky to receive others as brothers when they may not be truly accepted by God as his children. I too wish to be on the safe side, but I have quite a different view of the risks involved in hyper-selectivity in matters of fellowship. What I most fear is that I may mistakenly or through ignorance cut off one of my brethren from the body of Christ into which Christ has placed him. I greatly fear having to explain to my Lord how I happened so to judge one of his little ones. If at twilight a storm is brewing and several children, including my own along with others, are playing in the yard, I much prefer to invite them all into the house to share its warmth and shelter until definite identification can be made as to which children are my own. That would appear to be not only the "safe course" but the only sane and loving course.

I have been accused of being wishy-washy or uncommitted in my personal convictions when I openly seek to enjoy the fellowship of Christians who sing with a piano or who have a different theology of baptism. (actually I am afraid that I am rather dogmatic in my opinions.) The reason I wish to have fellowship with my brethren — or rather, enjoy the fellowship created by the Spirit of God — is because of my deep conviction that it is vital to the Christian life. It is not an optional matter, a kind of silly flirtation. Not at all. If you are my brother, the Spirit of God has baptized us into one family, and I must, if I would be

faithful to the Spirit, deny my personal sectarian jealousies in order to seek our mutual peace and growth in Christ.

And this brings us to an excellent stopping point. The fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, meekness, self-control is in sharp contrast to the works of the flesh listed above. And if carnality causes disunity, only the Holy Spirit can produce unity. It is no accident that brethren who are doing the most to seek the peace of Zion are also reminding us of the importance of the Spirit filled, Spirit motivated life. Only as we come to a deep appreciation of the Spirit's presence in the church will we find the unity which He alone gives, a unity which we are enjoined to keep until we all attain to the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:3, 13). — *Campus Minister, Eastern Illinois University, Box 172, Charleston, Illinois 61920.*

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Restoration Mind

What did you think of the Apollo 15 flight? There is surely a lot to learn from this wonderful universe that our Father has created! May the day not be too far removed when we shall be able to explore His *bound* revelation with the same eagerness and openness as we do His starlit creation. He most assuredly has blessed us with a curiosity that is not sated with answers, but rather one that finds in the answer the catalyst that demands an ever-increasing search for greater understanding. I would to God that we might find it possible to search His Word with a like eagerness and an insatiable desire to know, unfettered by the fear that truth will demand change. — *James Ledbetter, 7622 Fleming Hills Dr., Huntsville, Alabama.*

I get very angry and impatient when I think of how our Lord's church has been prostituted while in the guise of a vestal virgin. Sometimes I feel like screaming "Is there no purity, no innocence, no ideals left on earth?" But so few would even hear me. Repentance is the kind of revolution this earth needs — total instantaneous body, soul, and spirit change NOW! Too many Christians have been sent into battle defenseless. I can see some spiritual weapons in your journal. May God bless your enemies with the wisdom to seek the Restoration. Maranatha.—FORCE (Freaks Organized for Restoring Christ Entirely) *Jim Warner, 419 Probasco, Apt 11, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220.*

I suppose one could say that I have a baptism to be baptized with and a cup of pain from which I have to drink. I did not ask my Lord that I could sit on His right side or the left side in His glory, but I did ask Him to immerse me in His Holy Spirit that I might become a vessel fit for His use and for His glory. He honored that request and now my brethren demand that I deny Him. — *Phylene Pressley, Maricopa, Ca.*

From observations I made while in the University Center and at various meetings in Nashville I am sure that the Holy Spirit is on the verge of the greatest break-through in modern times; *Jim Olive, 4103 Gallatin Rd., Nashville 37216.*

A thousand Cries shatter Stillness of night.
Are you my brother whom I can love,
Or are you Another whom I must fight?
You are different — my soul groans;
My Spirit moans as though to say, “I cannot accept!
You believe the Same another way.”
Prayer finds me in deep despair,
Seeking, searching Depth somewhere.
Then Truth in Love rings pure,
I then declare,
“My God is our God!
Great or small,
Our God is Father of us all.”

— *Winston Hamby, 1312 W. Birch, Lovington, N. M. 88260*

We remind you that this journal is not published in July and August. So this September number is Vol. 13, No.7, which follows the June issue, which was No.6. This volume (1971) will be combined with volume 14 (1972) into a bound volume, having the title *The Restoration Mind.* We do this for libraries and individuals who wish to have a library copy of this journal for permanent reference. Since only 500 copies will be available, you should file your request with us now. You will be billed when the book is mailed to you.

We still have available all five of the volumes that we have bound into a book, with introduction, table of content, and dust jacket, all matching volumes. These are continuous since 1966. 3.00 each, We have a few copies of some of them, so you should order now if you are interested in a complete set.

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